

Three Questions Answered: Wisconsin



Ohio State opened Big Ten play on Saturday with a statement win over Wisconsin, demolishing the Badgers in a 52-21 win in which the final score is closer than the game appeared.

Prior to kickoff, Buckeye Sports Bulletin posed three significant questions for Ohio State as the Buckeyes prepared to take on Wisconsin, and we're taking a look back at how Ohio State fared in those categories.

1. Can Ohio State stop Braelon Allen?

This question depends on what time frame you look at.

In the first half, with the game still (somewhat) a contest, Wisconsin running back Braelon Allen had just eight rushes for 36 yards, just 4.5 yards per carry. He was essentially a non-factor for the Badgers, who couldn't get much of anything going on offense.

He had somewhat of a resurgence, though, in the second half once Ohio State's starters exited the game. He ultimately finished with 165 yards on 23 carries, boosted by a 75-yard touchdown run to cut the deficit to 52-21, the eventual final. But when the game still mattered, Wisconsin - likely the result of an anemic passing attack and an offensive line missing starters - did little to help Allen succeed against Ohio State.

2. Will health remain a concern for the Buckeyes?

The answer to this question is a resounding yes. Cornerbacks Cameron Brown, Denzel Burke and Jordan Hancock - Ohio State's top three corners entering the season - were all out against Wisconsin, leaving starting duties to sophomore JK Johnson and freshman Jyaire Brown, both of whom were making their first starts for the Buckeyes.

They responded admirably, helping Ohio State's secondary limit Wisconsin's passing attack to just 104 yards, though the Buckeyes would still like to see Cameron Brown and Burke - as well as Hancock, at least in a relief role - back on the field here soon.

Issues also abound at wide receiver, as Jaxon Smith-Njigba was ruled out against the Badgers. That's the second missed game this season for Smith-Njigba, who has just four receptions for 36 yards on the year. Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said the injury is not expected to be long term and the Buckeyes hope to have him back against Rutgers, but the same was said leading up to this game, so it's unknown when Smith-Njigba might return to the field for Ohio State.

3. Can Ohio State win the turnover battle?

This one was ultimately a push, as both Ohio State and Wisconsin left with one interception each.

Ohio State safety Tanner McCalister intercepted Wisconsin quarterback Graham Mertz on the Badgers' first drive of the game, and it helped the Buckeyes jump out to a 14-0 lead just over five minutes into the game. Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud was intercepted on the Buckeyes' final possession of the first half, though it resulted in no points for Wisconsin with under a minute remaining in the half.

While it was likely disappointing for Stroud to turn over the ball for the first time this season, it did not amount to much of anything, while McCalister's interception - his first of the season - was pivotal for Ohio State's winning effort.